

House panel okays funds

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House committee investigating assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King voted on Thursday to spend \$6.5 million in the first year of an estimated two year probe.

The 12-member select committee on assassinations approved the fund request without objection following a detailed presentation by chief counsel Richard A. Sprague, who described the budget as "bare bones."

Later, Sprague presented a brief outline of some areas already under investigation. These included:

- "Information from some sources dealing with surveillance by the FBI and security furnished Dr. King at the time of the assassination." It has been reported previously that a black police sergeant in charge of security for King's April 1968 visit to Memphis was sent home on the afternoon of the slaying.

- Obtaining names of witnesses to both assassinations. Sprague said some persons present at Parkland Hospital in Dallas who discovered a spent bullet believed to have struck Kennedy never were interviewed by law-enforcement officials.

- "Going into questions of certain photos." There have been repeated allegations that pictures of Oswald holding the rifle which killed Kennedy were altered.

- Investigating a report that, prior to the Nov. 22, 1963, slaying, U.S. intelligence agencies had information

about Oswald that was not fully disclosed to other agencies or to the Warren Commission.

Sprague also announced that the Justice Department, FBI and CIA have agreed in writing not to destroy any documents until the committee has completed its investigation.

The full House must approve the budget request when Congress convenes in January.

Members of the assassination committee appeared surprised by the size of Sprague's request, which is more than three times the amount spent by the House Judiciary Committee during its President Richard Nixon impeachment probe. The request "takes your breath away," Rep. Richardson Preyer, D-N.C., chairman of the subcommittee investigating the Kennedy assassination, told Sprague.

All the members present endorsed the budget proposal without reservation. "You get what you pay for," Preyer said.

"Congress' reputation is riding on this," Rep. Stewart McKinney, R-Conn., added. "If we're not going to be given the tools and if Mr. Sprague is not going to be given the tools, I would have to withdraw my name from the committee."

Sprague, former assistant district attorney in Philadelphia, led the government probe into the slaying of United Mine Workers insurgent Joseph Yablonski and tried the cases which resulted in eight murder convictions,

including that of UMW president W.A. "Tony" Boyle.

Sprague told the committee he could not put a time limit on the Kennedy and King investigations, but added his "best estimate" was that it would require two years.

Sprague said the second year might be less expensive since by then the areas of investigation would be narrowed.

More than half the \$6.5 million was earmarked for the salaries of the 170 staff members Sprague said he hopes to recruit.

Other major expenses in the budget included:

- \$1.8 million for travel by staff investigators;

- \$425,000 for long-distance telephone and telegraph bills;

- \$175,000 for the purchase and rental of such equipment as lie detectors, voice analyzers and the computers needed to cross reference the hundreds of thousands of documents which already exist.

In justifying the large staff, Sprague explained that he did not intend to rely on the efforts of investigators from other government agencies such as the CA and FBI since they would be under investigation for having withheld information at the time of the original probes into the two killings.

Sprague said the Warren Commission, which investigated the Kennedy assassination, had 83 staff members plus the services of 150 full time FBI agents,

for Kennedy, King probe

60 Secret Service agents and 13 CIA officers.

The House committee was created by a 280-65 vote in September and since that

time has been operating on a temporary budget of \$150,000.